

BULLETIN ON AGEING



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THE BEGINNING of a new year is perhaps an appropriate time to remember the slogan: *Moving forward into "A New Age for Old Age"*. This first issue of the Bulletin on Ageing for 1993 reflects several of the global efforts to give force to that movement.

During the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, a two-day International Conference on Ageing was held to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The issue contains the text of the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as extracts from other major statements made by the President of the Assembly, representatives from the regional groups and several non-governmental organizations, as well as extracts from the two resolutions on ageing adopted by the Assembly.

A short article on a United Nations plan to help the elderly within a project aimed at bringing peace and reconciliation to war-torn Croatia, and a report on a second seminar on Eastern and Central Europe round off the section on United Nations activities.

Descriptions of many of the celebrations held during the 1992 International Day for the Elderly appear on page 8.

United Nations activities

General Assembly addresses the question of ageing

At the two-day plenary meeting of the General Assembly, in October 1992, devoted to the International Conference on Ageing, the debate focused on the results of the first decade of implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as on the strategy for the future, aimed at streamlining the implementation of the Plan during the decade 1992-2001 at both national and international levels.

Contents	
United Nations activities	1
International Day for the Elderly: national celebrations ..	8
Calendar of events for 1993 and beyond	11

Representatives of 36 countries made statements on the issue of ageing: Argentina, Armenia (on behalf of the East European States), Australia, Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark (on behalf of West European and other States), Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland (on behalf of the Nordic countries), Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritania (on behalf of the African States), Mauritius, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey (on behalf of the Asian States), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (on behalf of the European Community), United States of America (on behalf of the host country), Uruguay (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States), Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Bridging the generations: a grandmother and her grandson (Styria, Austria)

Statements

Secretary-General

The statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is reproduced below:

"It gives me great pleasure to open this special plenary meeting of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. This is the first time the Assembly has addressed, in plenary, the question of population ageing. It is therefore an important occasion. I welcome participating delegations, and particularly the representative of organizations of the elderly.

"Between 1950 and the year 2025 the world population is projected to increase by a factor of three; those aged 60 and above, by a factor of six, and those aged 80 and above by a factor of 10. While the changes occurred first in developed countries, they are now beginning to be felt in developing countries as well.

"Population ageing is indeed an unprecedented demographic phenomenon. It has far-reaching ramifications. Work patterns, employment practices, health services, education and family policies are affected.

"Population ageing is therefore a challenge to world society as much as to national societies. It is a highly appropriate issue for this Organization to tackle.

"Ten years ago, over a thousand delegates from 124 Member States gathered at the World Assembly on Ageing, in Vienna. The World Assembly adopted the International Plan of Action on Ageing subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly.

"The United Nations has promoted the Plan and monitored its implementation. The Secretariat formulated an action programme on ageing for 1992. In adopting it, the General Assembly called for a practical strategy on ageing for the next decade. I commend to you the document 'Global targets on ageing for the year 2001'.

"The global targets seek to make effective use of existing infrastructures, programmes and scheduled events for promoting implementation of the Plan of Action in the years ahead. They identify opportunities for integrating ageing into the mainstream of development. They aim to expand the range of the United Nations programme on ageing without incurring major financial obligations. They are an attempt at devising a long-term practical global strategy for ageing. We must test this strategy in the coming years.

"It is a pleasant duty on the occasion of the tenth anniversary to thank all those who have contributed to the United Nations programme on ageing.

Statistics did not tell the real story about the isolation and destitution of the elderly. It would be a tragedy if the United Nations allowed such valued members of society to be lost. Ageing was not merely a demographic issue, it was a cultural issue. In many cultures, ageing was a trauma, in others it was simply part of the process and cycle of life.

Life could not be neatly divided into age or ability groupings, it must be considered as one process. The right to live with dignity and the right to die with dignity were equal. Society was moving away from the idea of institutional services and towards a participatory approach with economic independence for the elderly. (President of the International Federation on Ageing)

Member States and their institutions and committees concerned with ageing have been partners in a collective effort. I pay tribute to the many non-governmental organizations, associations of older persons, and research and training institutions which have been so generous in their efforts. I acknowledge with satisfaction the increasing efforts of the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system to serve the needs of Member States as effectively as possible.

"The decade ahead will need all our energies, expertise and goodwill as we help each other adjust our thinking, planning, resource allocation and practical actions for what is often called 'the age of ageing'.

"On the occasion of the tenth anniversary it is also a particular pleasure to greet the eminent personalities whom I have invited as my special guests to observe the work of the plenary meetings. Some of them participated in drafting the International Plan of Action on Ageing and in preparing the draft global targets on ageing for the year 2001. All have made a valuable contribution to the United Nations programme on ageing at national or international levels.

"The last decade has posed the whole question of ageing in new terms. In the past a shadow of commiseration had long veiled developed societies' view of the elderly. One example of this, among a thousand others, is Victor Hugo's phrase 'to grow old is to see the fading of the light'. On the other hand, more traditional societies in the third world consider age more favourably. The demographic evolution to which I referred a few moments ago will undoubtedly once again, everywhere in the world, bring into prominence this positive attitude towards age. Perhaps one of the main objectives of our programme for the coming decade is to share this conception of ageing, which thus could well become universal.

"The cult of youth, this obsession that has so rightly been described by the word 'youthism' has its inherent

dangers. It has of course made a certain contribution to the dynamism of modern societies, but it has also essentially relegated to the background everything that is not young or can no longer pretend to be. There is no doubt that we have over-exulted a society in which things do not take sufficient time to grow old, in which people can no longer afford to own up to the fact that they are growing old. In the passage of time, in age, in personal acceptance of age, we have something full of promise — promise for everyone: the benefit of experience, of maturity and of knowledge and wisdom.

"What is more, this is full of promise for society at large, because it is to be hoped that if more prominence is given to the elderly it will help us to re-establish a balance in our own rhythms. In particular, during the Rio Conference it was quite clear that an excessive spirit of conquest might drag the world to its perdition.

"What we have here is a minor psychological revolution: to give time time for itself. This means we must have a new approach to ourselves, a better understanding of all ages of life, striking a balance between the spirit of conquest and the spirit of maturity. Let us take the time to live. Let us take the time to grow old.

"The twentieth century has its shadows; it also has its light. Because of the progress made in science and technology, it has succeeded in extending the duration of life. This is a victory. But it will remain an imperfect victory if at the same time we do not have a positive attitude towards ageing.

"These extra years we have won for ourselves should be full years—that is, they should be useful to others, they should be creative. They should create the future. Only then will this victory be complete. We have to work at this maturing process in the next 10 years.

"I believe the main effort required is psychological. I say 'believe' because I have no hard and fast ideas on this subject. I hope I will in a few years time.

particularly after your debates. May your work therefore be both lively and fruitful. Good luck!"

Statements made during the Assembly are summarized below.

President of the General Assembly

The debate offered an opportunity of examining the impact of an ageing population on national life, infrastructure and resources. It also offered an opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to international and multisectoral collaboration on ageing in the decade ahead. The ageing of the world's population had a range of far-reaching social, economic and developmental consequences and was potentially one of the most serious socio-economic issues of the next decade.

Ageing was often viewed as an economic burden. The question was whether ageing was to become a nightmare of escalating costs to support an increasingly dependent population, or to be considered a celebration of the twentieth century, a success story of reduced mortality rates and increased longevity. The kinds of public policies adopted would determine the way in which the issue would unfold. While the International Plan of Action provided a multidimensional framework for a global programme, its success depended on the actions taken by Member States, which had responsibility for legislating and implementing social programmes, and organizations both for and of the elderly.

Progress in the implementation of the International Plan of Action had been uneven in different regions of the world and, on an international scale, unfortunately not very impressive. Attention had tended to focus on awareness-raising and advocacy, which in themselves were of cardinal importance. Yet that had not been sufficiently translated into actual programmes that had an impact on older persons.

The major task for the decade 1992-2001 lay in making the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing more effective in the context of national priorities and on the basis of available resources. While the ageing of populations could be predicted with relative certainty, the timely adjustment of social and economic infrastructure was likely, regrettably, to lag behind, seriously in many places. Therein lay the challenge for individual countries and the

international community. Policies and partnerships, ideas and initiative were imperative to set the future tone for the issue as the next decade began.

Representatives

Efforts on behalf of older citizens had a special meaning beyond the economic and social concerns related to rapidly ageing populations, as important as those concerns were. Older citizens represented not only a link to the past, but also a vital bridge to the future.

What clearly was in the best interest of all nations was to establish as a major goal and priority the maintenance, and restoration, of the maximum degree of independence and self-sufficiency for each older citizen. However, public resources in most countries were already strained and were likely to be more so in the foreseeable future. The only viable course of action under those circumstances was to broaden the base of support and to augment public resources from other sources.

(United States, on behalf of the host country)

The lofty tenets of the International Plan of Action remained a distant dream; funding levels for planning, research, documentation and even cooperation between United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations remained minimal. Member States owed dues, and Governments, pressed hard by economic crises and international debt burdens, had generally cut back on opportunities for the elderly. The private sector had not yet taken up the issue. *(Representative of the Church World Service and NGO Committee on Ageing, New York)*

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Respect for the elderly was a common feature of the culture of all the Asian countries, wherein the elderly maintain their positions of high esteem within the family and contribute to the family's welfare. By remaining a part of the family, the elderly had an opportunity of living



An elderly man in Madras, India

A recent conference on the elderly in the global community, held in cooperation with the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, had concluded that national and international agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, should include older persons in the planning of sustainable development and environmental protection activities at all levels. That could range from the development of a country-wide strategy to promote productive ageing, to setting up local garden projects that would provide seeds for older persons who wanted to produce their own food, either for their own consumption or for income. Older persons should be recognized as valued members of their communities' development, not burdens, but contributors. (Representative of the American Association of Retired Persons and NGO Committee on Ageing, New York)

their lives in dignity and fulfilment. Any action by the United Nations to enhance the position of the elderly in society would be given enthusiastic support by the Group of Asian States.

(Turkey, on behalf of the Asian States)

...

Structural adjustment policies in Africa had weakened the infrastructure designed to serve the elderly. That situation presented problems in view of the respect accorded to the elderly in African societies. The founding of the African Society of Gerontology in 1989 was a tribute to the role of the elderly and their exceptional place in African society. National strategies benefiting the elderly would remain limited unless they were supported by effective and active international solidarity, which should include the exchange of experience and expertise, and above all the reform of current economic relationships that were detrimental to the developing countries.

(Mauritania, on behalf of the African States)

...

The reform of national infrastructures to develop and promote strategies on ageing was particularly significant for members of the Group of Eastern European States. Those countries had embarked upon a major programme of structural reforms, including privatization, fiscal and monetary restructuring, and price and trade liberalization. The benefits of

those reforms would begin to improve living conditions significantly only after a difficult period, which might last several years. Eastern European States needed to replace the pension and income security plans established under the formerly centrally planned economies, which, as a result of the staggering inflation rate in their region, did not provide sufficient income levels.

Programmes and policies for the elderly needed to be integrated into the new political and legal structures of those countries. Statistics showed that life expectancy among those countries lagged behind other countries in the industrial world. To

confront that challenge, the Eastern European countries must upgrade their health-care system.

The Group expressed their support for the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing and all the non-governmental organizations that had contributed time and money to programmes directed to the elderly. The Group also paid tribute to and commended the work of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, which had been the focal point and coordinator of all international activity concerning the International Plan of Action.

(Armenia, on behalf of the Eastern European States)

...

The elderly were not passive beings; they should be considered agents of development, with great productive potential and a store of experience that should be used for the benefit of society. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States supported the recently created Banyan Fund.

In 1980, there were more than 23 million aged people in Latin America and the Caribbean; a total of 40 million was forecast for the year 2000, and 93 million for the year 2025. At the same time, in Latin America, life expectancy at birth had increased from 51.2 years in the period 1950-1955 to 71.8 years in the period



A Peruvian face

Photo: ILO/J. Maillard

2020-2025, showing that Latin America could no longer be considered a "young region", since it was undergoing an accelerated demographic transition towards lower birth and mortality rates.

It was very important to create an institution for ageing for the region, similar to the one in Malta, in order to meet its needs, especially in the light of the situation of ageing women.

(Uruguay, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States)

* * *

The dramatic change in the demographic structure of society would have significant consequences, which would have to be taken into account in overall social and economic planning. The Assembly called for a pragmatic focus to be put on the broad and ideal goals of the International Plan of Action, in the form of global targets on ageing for the year 2001. When adopted, those targets would support national responses to the ageing of populations and give further impetus to the implementation of the Plan and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

(Denmark, on behalf of the Western European and other States)

* * *

The United Nations had a particularly significant role in supporting projects related to the ageing of populations in developing countries. Those countries should be given encouragement and support in their own efforts to maintain family structures in which elderly people were respected and cared for at home.

The preparation of national targets and programmes was most important. Setting goals and adopting national programmes was not enough, however. Active implementation and evaluation of the measures taken was also needed. Through international cooperation, countries could learn from each other applying the models of action that suited their own countries and cultures.

(Finland, on behalf of the Nordic countries)

* * *

The European Community Decisions of 26 November 1990 and 24 June 1992 designated 1993 as the Year of Older People and Solidarity

between Generations. Among the objectives of the Year were those of bringing to the public's notice the challenges resulting from the ageing of the population and of promoting reflection and discussion on the types of change required in order to deal with current demographic developments. The measures planned throughout the Community by member States, the Commission, the European Parliament and older people's organizations included intergenerational activities and information campaigns to combat ageism, to promote health and to raise awareness of the contribution of older people to society.

The Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Ageing and Elderly Women into Development, which took place at Vienna in October 1991, recommended that employment policies and practices that discriminated against elderly women should be eliminated. Training and retraining should be available to enable ageing and elderly women to enter or re-enter the labour force.

(United Kingdom, on behalf of the European Community)

Resolutions

General Assembly resolution 47/5, to which is annexed the Proclamation on Ageing, urged the international community, *inter alia*: to promote the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing; to disseminate widely the United Nations Principles for Older Persons; and to support the practical strategies for reaching the global targets on ageing for the year 2001. It also urged the support of national initiatives on ageing in the context of national cultures and conditions. It decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. (For further details, please refer to the *Bulletin on Ageing*, No. 3/1992.)

General Assembly resolution 47/86, entitled "Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing: integration of older persons in development", *inter alia*: adopted the global targets on ageing for the year 2001 as a practical strategy on ageing, and urged Member States to support that strategy and to consult the guide for setting national targets contained therein. It invited the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs as the lead and coordinating agency for the global

targets, to update the target strategies periodically on the basis of achievements and new opportunities and to refine indicators for measuring progress in cooperation with the International Institute on Ageing in Malta and others. It also invited the regional commissions of the United Nations to assist Member States in setting regional targets on ageing for the year 2001, bearing in mind the global targets and the diverse national needs in their regions. It acknowledged with appreciation the major contribution of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to the global information campaign, and requested it to continue its work on ageing during the coming decade. It also acknowledged with appreciation the initiative, expertise and dedication of the non-governmental community, and invited the Centre to explore the feasibility of establishing a non-governmental advisory committee, funded by voluntary contributions, to assist the Secretariat in promoting the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the target strategies. It commended the International Institute on Ageing on its training programme and related activities, invited national, regional and international organizations to cooperate closely with the Institute, and invited interested Member States and others to explore the feasibility of establishing a training institute on ageing for Latin America and the Caribbean. It urged the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations to support the African Society of Gerontology in developing and implementing a regional programme of activities on ageing. It also invited Member States to support generously the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing in order to enable it to continue serving as an operational tool of the United Nations programme on ageing. It further invited Member States, corporations and foundations to support the Banyan Fund Association: A World Fund for Ageing, and urged the United Nations Development Programme and other development agencies to include a component on ageing in their regular programmes.

The resolutions are available from the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in the six official languages of the United Nations.

A glimmer of light appears in war-torn Croatia

In the horror and tragedy of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, those who have suffered the most are, undeniably, the elderly. Uprooted from their ancestral homes by force or intimidation, they have been moved into unfamiliar surroundings with few possessions. These displaced elderly live in temporary shelters or as "guests" among reluctant "host" families who themselves are living at bare subsistence level. They suffer not just from the demands of the winter weather, but also from lack of adequate nutrition.

Those who have chosen to remain on their farms, often at great danger to themselves and their property, live in buildings with parts of the roof destroyed, windows shattered, no heating, dependent on charity for their daily subsistence. They have chosen to cling to their ancestral land for the sake of their children, at great cost to their health and well-being. Yet many of them are without familial support; their children and other family members having fled from their homes under the threat of "ethnic cleansing".

The anguish suffered by the elderly in the former Yugoslavia is echoed in many other parts of the world. Yet, one small ray of light in this dark page of Balkan history has been lit by a project under way in the United Nations Protected Area, Sector West (Western Slavonia), centred on the areas of Pakrac and Okučani. A social reconstruction project to aid the return of the ethnic groups to their original homes has been developed by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for this area. This initiative is working towards peace-building and reconciliation amongst the previously warring groups by providing welfare services of various kinds. Those in crucial need will be served, irrespective of their ethnic origin. The project includes special services for elderly people living alone in critical conditions and scattered over isolated communities laid waste by the current conflict. The project is being funded by the United Nations Development Programme, in cooperation with the United Nations Protection Force, the local community, the municipal authorities and an area coordination committee.

Many of the elderly in the region have chosen to remain in their homes;

they will be assisted with home repairs and provided with heating stoves, other basic furniture and nursing care. At the same time, those wishing to return to their homes will be provided with on-site temporary shelters (dormitory containers), donated by the Austrian Government, while their homes are being made habitable again. A daily home-visiting programme is provided by medical staff and social workers to take care of those unable to look after themselves. The returning displaced people will be reintegrated into their home villages,

while the socio-economic activities of the region will be revitalized. In the current situation, maintaining the elderly in their homes becomes not only an expensive option, but is also not necessarily the most effective way of caring for them. Therefore, in addition to the home-visiting programme, several small units or homes will be repaired and furnished, allowing up to 15 elderly people to live together in small family-type units where they will have companionship in a congenial atmosphere.

Several non-governmental organizations are participating actively in the project. HelpAge International is



Huddling by a stove for warmth: an inhabitant of a home for the elderly in Okučani



The only way to keep warm is by staying in bed: an elderly woman in the home for the elderly in Okucani

contributing by providing funds for multi-ethnic home-visitation teams to check on the health, food supplies and well-being of the elderly on both sides of the cease-fire line. A Vienna-based organization, Helping Hands, is providing assistance in the repair of the homes. A volunteer group in Leibnitz, Austria, has taken on the responsibility for repairing and equipping an old-age home near Pakrac. The NGO Committee on Ageing, Vienna, has contributed clothing, hygienic items and medicines. CARE Austria has given blankets and equipment to the local clinics. Forum Out, also based in Austria, has helped with transport

and the provision of needed supplies for the elderly.

Many innovative and encouraging measures have been undertaken in the concerted drive to bring peace and reconciliation to the area. Cultural, recreational, interpersonal and community interactions are being planned to relieve the isolation and depression of the elderly. Trauma and bereavement counselling are also being organized, to help the elderly overcome the effects of the hostilities. This is particularly important since in addition to the horrors of the current situation, many of the elderly have survived two world wars and retain

memories of concentration and work camps. Voluntary services from among the youth are being solicited. Since the initiation of the project, significant efforts have been made in breaking down barriers between the ethnic groups. Arrangements have been made for women and children to visit grandparents, daily meetings occur between family members, packages are exchanged at the various checkpoints throughout the area, while 2,000 people have been able to visit their former villages.

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna visited the project area in December and was deeply moved by the destruction and great personal tragedies he witnessed but also by encouraging signs of reconciliation. He said that the success of the project would not be easy to achieve but it was impossible to sit back and do nothing. He hoped that the international community, non-governmental organizations, and individuals of goodwill would reach out and help the elderly, children, abused women and other innocent victims of the terrible conflict.

Second seminar on Eastern and Central Europe

A seminar in support of age-care activities in Eastern and Central Europe was held at the Vienna International Centre from 25 to 27 November 1992. The seminar was organized by the United Nations Office at Vienna/Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (UNOV/CSDHA), in cooperation with HelpAge International (HAI) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). It was a follow-up to a successful seminar on societies in change and transition, held by HelpAge and UNOV in July 1991, which had brought together newly established non-governmental organizations in the region to examine and further develop their capabilities for providing care for the elderly and to suggest measures to integrate the elderly into the community and into national development plans.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations from the following countries were represented at the seminar: Czechoslovakia, Germany, Poland, Romania and Ukraine, together with government representatives from Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

Financial support for the seminar was provided by the Government of Germany through the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

In his opening address to the meeting, the Director of the Social Development Division, UNOV/CSDHA, welcomed the participants by stating that they were its right arm in running programmes and obtaining fruitful results. The meeting, he said, was taking place at a crucial time, since UNOV was reviewing a number of its actions over the last 10 years. He stressed that there had been an impressive amount of support at the ministerial level at the General Assembly for issues concerning the elderly, and that celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action had increased awareness of what had been done and what remained to be done.

The Development Director of HelpAge International acknowledged that the seminar was taking place after 16 months of great activity, which was not only a result of follow-up to the seminar held in 1991, but also an indication of the many changes taking place in the region. The challenges facing the community of non-governmental organizations continued to grow and he hoped that the seminar would provide an opportunity for reviewing progress, discussing problems and renewing energy for the work that lies ahead. Non-governmental organizations, he believed, were increasingly providing support to the needy, marginalized elderly, where government services were either not available, disintegrating or insufficient; they could also motivate new activities, represent the interests of older persons, provide crucial support services and work in productive partnership with Governments. He pointed out that with the move away from public enterprise towards voluntary private initiative taking place in Europe, there was an increasing tendency for non-governmental organizations to deliver services that had once been provided by Governments; it should be remembered, however, that although that might result in a better quality of service at lower cost, the independence of the non-governmental organization sector should not be lost.

Among the items discussed during the seminar were: issues facing the

elderly in Eastern and Central Europe; programmes addressing loneliness and isolation; programmes in community and health care; development of non-governmental organizations; setting priorities and identifying targets for the future.

Five recommendations that were adopted at the conclusion of the seminar are summarized below:

- The participants urged the United Nations to recognize the importance of work carried out by non-governmental organizations in Eastern and Central Europe, and to support their further development through, *inter alia*, technical assistance, exchange of information and training.
- Non-governmental organizations from Eastern and Central Europe were invited to use United Nations documents and promotional events as a framework for action in the next decade.
- Non-governmental organizations, together with HAI, AARP and UNOV/CSDHA, should launch information, education and communication campaigns on ageing in Eastern and Central Europe to promote positive images of ageing.
- HAI, AARP and UNOV/CSDHA should jointly review progress on programme and project development and consider future needs and exchanges of experience, possibly by convening a third seminar at Bucharest by July 1994.
- UNOV/CSDHA in cooperation with HAI and AARP will explore the possibility of publishing a guide to reaching selected targets on ageing, with special reference to Eastern and Central Europe, and a brief study, to inform a wider public, on the situation of older persons in the region.

International Day for the Elderly: national celebrations

The second International Day for the Elderly was celebrated globally on 1 October 1992.* In his message on the occasion, the Secretary-General pointed out that a steady stream of 1 million people crossed the threshold of 60 years every month, 80 per cent of them in developing countries. That quiet demographic revolution, the ageing of populations, was affecting the social, economic and even political structures of societies. Only societies that successfully adjusted policies, provisions and attitudes to integrate the growing numbers of older persons could prosper. Such progress would not be for the old alone, but for all, since the aged were a minority most people would join. Younger age groups knew that their future could be bright, when they saw older persons

active, creative, contributing to society, as well as caring and being cared for. Generations were not interdependent in the exchange of affection, services and goods but, in an existential way, they were one.

The ageing of populations offered new opportunities and new challenges. The Secretary-General concluded: "In these times of widespread want, war and uncertainty, it is fitting that we also count our blessings. And one of these is that years have been added to life. Let us focus increasing attention on adding life to those newly won years."

Canada

A long-term care facility for elderly and non-elderly persons, the Dr. Vernon Fanning Extended Care Centre, celebrated the International

*Lack of space unfortunately precludes the inclusion of more events.

Day for the Elderly at the Fanning Centre, which 300 people call home.

The staff created a montage of photographs of past and present residents participating in leisure activities. This provided residents, staff and visitors with an opportunity of seeing the many different pursuits offered at the Centre.

On three geriatric floors, sing-alongs were hosted during the afternoon of 1 October, in which staff and visitors were encouraged to take part to provide a "Salute to Seniors".

Although the event was local, it raised awareness within the community and made many of the elderly residents feel special to be so honoured.

Cuba

The Day was celebrated in 15 provinces. In Havana, the events, covering three days, included discussions by a group of experts on present and future programmes on care of the elderly, and ended with a national party.

Throughout the country, celebrations in hospitals, nursing, residential, and community homes covered a wide range of activities including: dance, theatre and the cinema, concerts, sports competitions, television and radio programmes, newspaper articles and exhibitions.

France

France held a "Blue Week" from 18 to 25 October to celebrate the Day under the theme, "365 days to perform, 7 days to inform". Preparations for the week included information forums and debates on solidarity between the generations and the active role to be played by the elderly in society. Each department submitted projects on the theme, the best of which received a national prize in Paris on 7 October, as a prelude to the Blue Week. The event was a joint collaboration between 30 associations throughout France.

Japan

In a hall at Ginza, in the centre of Tokyo, 180 people gathered on 1 October; 52 of them were winners of the Second Design Competition for the Elderly. They came from various

professions and their ages ranged from 18 to 83. The event was attended by representatives from UNOV/CSDHA and the Banyan Fund Association, who collaborated in its organization.

The objective of the competition was to tap the potential of elderly people and to prove they are invaluable assets to society. The national competition, open to all age groups, received 822 entries, an increase of 271 over the previous year. Over 70 per cent of the entries were from people aged 60 years and over.

The major prizewinner, 59 years old, had designed an auxiliary power-driven device that could be fitted to a conventional wheelchair; the demonstration wheelchair also had a fitted canopy, covered by solar batteries to enable the main battery to be permanently charged.

The competition was truly multi-purpose: in addition to developing human resources, it was intergenerational, it worked as a powerful fund-raising tool and it attracted wide publicity throughout the media.

The organizers envisage that the event will be a global one by the year 2000.

Kenya

HelpAge Kenya made various arrangements for the day geared towards raising awareness as well as fund-

raising. Among the many activities were the following:

- A radio interview for the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, broadcast in both English and Kiswahili, which reached a wide cross-section of the Kenyan population;
- A charity football match to which radio and local daily newspapers gave wide coverage;
- An essay competition on the elderly held by primary and secondary schools;
- Involvement of the elderly, by a self-help group, in decisions on celebrations, which included planting trees for the benefit of future generations;
- Celebrations held by one of the homes supported by HelpAge Kenya in Ruaraka, in which pupils from secondary schools sang and entertained the elderly and guests at the home. Sight by Wings, a charitable organization offering ophthalmic care through open-air clinics throughout the country, set up an eye clinic at the home, and provided their services free of charge.

New Zealand

As part of the national celebrations, the Minister for Senior Citizens attended an event organized by the

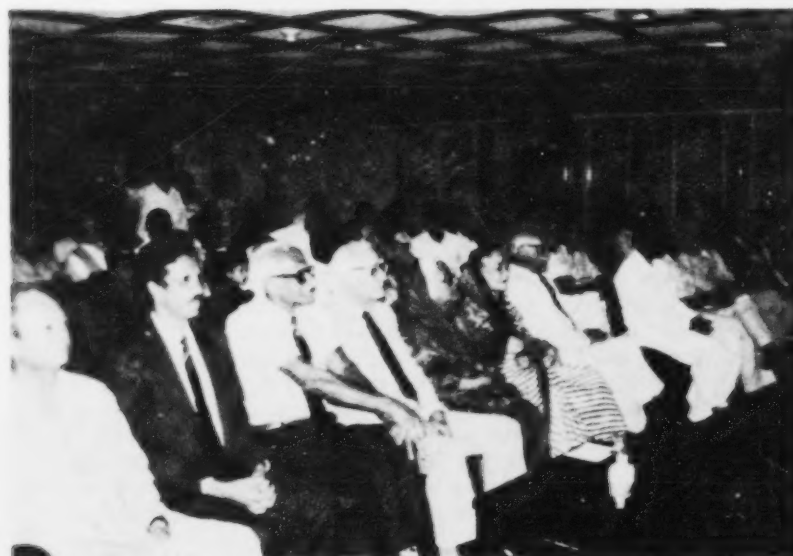
United Nations Office at Vienna

The International Day for the Elderly marked both the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the end of the first decade of its implementation.

A series of commemorative events was organized by UNOV/CSDHA, in cooperation with the Vienna NGO Committee on Ageing. The events included a one-day symposium on "There is a future in ageing", attended, as patroness, by the Austrian First Lady, Edith Klestil. Two exhibitions were mounted in the Vienna International Centre: one on the United Nations programme on ageing; the second was of children's drawings on the theme "My Grandparents and Me". Musical and dance performances by a children's choir, and a folk-dance group of elderly persons, also took place in the building. Two Vienna associations for the elderly, in collaboration with the Vienna NGO Committee on Ageing, organized a celebratory event on 1 October, including a ceremony in the garden of the town hall of Vienna, near a linden tree planted in 1982 on the occasion of the World Assembly on Ageing. This ceremony was organized by an association of retired persons in cooperation with the Vienna NGO Committee on Ageing and the office of the Mayor of the City of Vienna.

Wairarapa Organization for Older Persons, based in Masterton. During the event, attended by 250 local senior citizens, a hot meal was served to guests by a team of volunteers and local primary-school children. The Minister presented the prizes for two competitions: one, a competition for Grandparent of the Year, asked children to say why they thought their grandparent deserved to win a weekend for two in a hotel in Wellington (won by a Scottish-born pensioner, whose granddaughter, 4½, had written a poem in his honour); the second, a mural competition, invited local primary schools to complete a mural based on the theme "Age is Ageless" (won by Masterton Central School).

The Minister described the various programmes aimed at the elderly throughout New Zealand: the Fifties Forward programme, sponsored by the Hillary Commission, resulted in older people in communities all over the country organizing themselves to develop a range of fitness and recreation programmes; Age Wise, a growing self-help network, promoted the development and use of educational opportunities for senior citizens; Age Concern had developed a "good neighbour" scheme for people living alone in the community, and a visitors service for people in rest homes without family or friends to visit them.



... watched by members of the Pakistan Senior Citizens Association.



Children dancing as part of the celebrations for the International Day for the Elderly held at Karachi, Pakistan.

Pakistan

The Day was celebrated throughout Pakistan in conjunction with Universal Children's Day. The intergenerational activities included a gathering at a hotel in Karachi, commencing with a tableau presented by children, followed by dances, music and speeches. The meeting was organized by the Pakistan Senior Citizens Association and the Rotary Club of Karachi.

During the gathering, attention was drawn to the absence of effective social legislation for the welfare and mobilization of able-bodied senior citizens, similar to that for the disabled. Emphasis was placed on the need for the earliest possible foundation of a National Institute of Geriatrics and Gerontology.

United States of America

A proclamation was issued by the Mayor of New York City, David N. Dinkins, on the fifteenth annual Age in Action festival, sponsored by the New York City Department for the Ageing, which was held in conjunction with the celebration of the International Day at United Nations Headquarters.

The day-long festival featured the skills and talents of older New Yorkers from 335 senior centres throughout the city: the arts, crafts, music and dance of many countries celebrated the diversity of the population and the heritage that each contributes to the cultural life of the city.

Representatives from social services, health, community, cultural, public affairs and other organizations provided important information on the resources available to older New Yorkers. The proclamation ended with 2 October being proclaimed as "Age in Action Day".

Calendar of events for 1993 and beyond

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Meeting</i>
8-17 February	Vienna, Austria	Commission for Social Development (UNOV/CSDHA)
18-19 February	Vienna, Austria	Fifth Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Ageing (UNOV/CSDHA together with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies)
1-3 March	Copenhagen, Denmark, and Malmö, Sweden	Fourteenth International Congress: Changing attitudes towards the elderly (European Federation for the Welfare of the Elderly)
12-16 April	San José, Costa Rica	Sixth International Week of Geriatrics and Gerontology (Social Security Office of Costa Rica)
4-7 May	Gran Canaria, Spain	International Conference on Third Age Tourism (Seniors C por tres, under the patronage of the Secretary-General of Tourism and the World Tourism Organization in collaboration with the World Health Organization)
9-14 May	Bonn, Germany	Ninth Congress of the International Council of Homehelp Services
3-6 June	Fredericia, Denmark	International Conference on the Family as Carers; Older Women in the European Community and Older People and the Media (Daneage Association)
12-19 June	Antibes, France	Euro Seniors, the Senior European Games, sponsored by the Commission of the European Communities, the French Secretariat for the Family and Ageing and other French regional offices, the publication <i>Notre Temps</i> and Specia Laboratories
4-9 July	Budapest, Hungary	Fifteenth International Congress of Gerontology (International Association of Gerontology)
5-10 September	Berlin, Germany	Sixth Congress of the International Psychogeriatric Association
20-22 September	Toronto, Canada	Ninth Annual Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International under the theme "Global challenges, local action"
22-24 September	Maastricht, Netherlands	Third European Congress for Directors of Residential Care Homes (Netherlands Association of Directors of Care Homes for the Elderly and European Association for Directors of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly)
23-26 September	Singapore	International Conference on the Elderly (Singapore Action Group of Elders)
1 October	Worldwide	Third celebration of the International Day for the Elderly (all interested Governments, organizations and individuals)
11-13 October	Birmingham, United Kingdom	Investing in older people at work: A symposium for employers, policy makers and health professionals from the United Kingdom and EC Member States (London Health Education Authority as part of the United Kingdom Core Programme for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations)
23-29 October	Atlanta, United States	First North American Regional Conference of Rehabilitation International (United States Council for International Rehabilitation and Canadian Rehabilitation Council)
1993	London, Copenhagen, New York, Moscow	Musical event: proceeds for the work of HelpAge International (Daneage Foundation)
1993-1994 (tentative)	China	Seminar on innovations in education for the elderly (UNOV/CSDHA in cooperation with China National Committee on Ageing)

Calendar of events for 1994

5-13 September	Cairo, Egypt	International Conference on Population and Development (Population Division, United Nations Secretariat)
1 October	Worldwide	Fourth celebration of the International Day for the Elderly (all interested Governments, organizations and individuals)

Calendar of events for 1995-2001

1995		
5-16 September	Beijing, China	Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (UN/CSDHA)
1 October	Worldwide	Fifth celebration of the International Day for the Elderly (all interested Governments, organizations and individuals)
1997		
August	Adelaide, Australia	Sixteenth International Congress of Gerontology (International Association of Gerontology)
1 October	Worldwide	Seventh celebration of the International Day for the Elderly (all interested Governments, organizations and individuals)
2001		
1 October	Worldwide	Eleventh celebration of the International Day for the Elderly (all interested Governments, organizations and individuals)
	(to be decided)	Seventeenth International Congress of Gerontology (International Association of Gerontology)